
TESTIMONY

Testimony To: House Committee on Education
Respectfully Submitted by: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education
Subject: **Draft Bill on Independent Schools**
Date: March 14, 2023

The Committee asked me to provide testimony on its draft bill (Drafting Request #23-0910 – draft 1.1 dated 2/13/2023) relative to Vermont’s independent schools. We do not fully support this bill for the following reasons.

1. The State Board recently completed a lengthy rule-making process to improve the oversight and regulation of independent schools. These rules take full effect on July 1, 2023. We believe these rules should be implemented before any additional changes are made to the oversight of independent schools.
2. Recent court rulings around the religious status of independent schools do not justify any significant change in the oversight of independent schools. We would support, however, strengthening our oversight of anti-discrimination provisions to ensure those independent schools that choose to accept public tuition dollars meet the non-discrimination requirements of Vermont’s Public Accommodations laws.